

This guide to mammals of Potato Creek State Park is intended to assist you in your wildlife observations. It tells you what animals to expect in the park and where best to look for them. However, if you have any questions or comments concerning the park's wildlife, please contact the Nature Center staff.

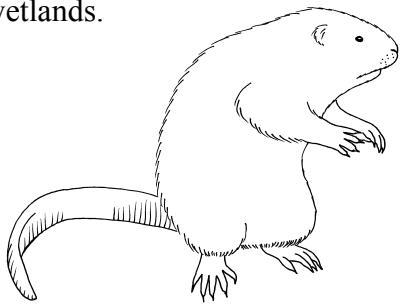
Please help protect the park's wildlife, do not disturb or handle any wild animals you find.

Beaver

The beaver is the largest rodent in North America, weighing up to 60 pounds. They have a broad paddle-like tail and webbed hind feet. Beavers eat the bark and twigs of a variety of plants. In the park, they can be found in the creek and Worster Lake where they have constructed dams and lodges.

Muskrat

Musk rats are sometimes mistaken for beaver, however they are smaller and have a long, thin tail which is flat vertically from side to side and appears scaly. They live near ponds, lakes and streams where they feed on aquatic plants, clams, frogs and fish. You can see muskrats at Summer's Pond, along the west shore of the lake and in many other park wetlands.



Muskrat

Eastern Chipmunk

The chipmunk looks like a small squirrel with white stripes down each side of its back. Listen for the loud chatter as this small rodent flees across the forest floor to find cover, holding its tail straight up in the air. Active only during the day, the chipmunk eats seeds, fruit, nuts and insects.

Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrel

This ground squirrel is often confused with the chipmunk. As the name implies, it has 13 white stripes or rows of spots on its back. Feeding mainly on seeds and insects, you will find this small mammal in open grassy areas, such as the campground and picnic areas. Here it burrows, making tunnels in the ground, where it will also hibernate.

Red Squirrel

The small red squirrel, also called a pine squirrel, is often found in pine forests but, as in the park, they also live in hardwood forest. Sometimes confused with a chipmunk, it has tufts of fur on its ears, and a white underside. They eat a variety of seeds, storing them in hiding places called caches.

Fox Squirrel

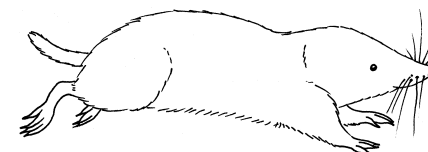
This is the largest tree squirrel in Indiana. The fox squirrel can be found in most wooded areas of the park. Their coat is reddish-brown above and orange underneath. They eat a wide variety of seeds and wild fruits but prefer acorns, hickory and beech nuts. Look for these squirrels at the Nature Center feeders or along woodland trails.

Meadow Vole

This vole has a dull, dark chestnut colored back and a silvery underbelly. The meadow vole can be seen in grassy areas of the park. They feed on grass, seeds and some insects. Voles look similar to mice but have a shorter tail, larger head and smaller ears.



Meadow Vole



Shorttail Shrew

Shorttail Shrew

Shrews are easily mistaken for mice, but looking more closely you will see they have a short tail, tiny eyes, no visible ears and a long pointed nose, which they use to detect prey. They are voracious eaters, feeding almost continually on small insects and other bugs. Found on the forest floor, shrews tunnel through the undergrowth. Their saliva is poisonous, killing the earthworms and insects which they hunt.

White-footed Mouse

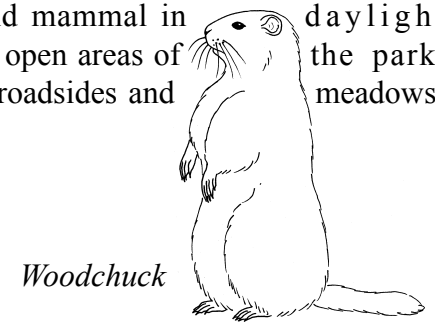
Found in wooded or brushy areas, this is probably the most common mouse found in the park. It has a gray or reddish-brown coat, with white feet and belly. The tail is usually shorter than the head and body. This mouse is nocturnal and eats seeds, nuts and insects.

Eastern Cottontail

The cottontail is found in open woodland and meadows, where there are plenty of young plant shoots to eat, but protective cover is close by. These mammals are a staple food in the diet of great horned owls and foxes. Watch for them early in the morning or late in the evening along roadsides and in picnic areas.

Woodchuck

Often mistaken for a beaver, the woodchuck is also known as a groundhog. It is a large grizzly-gray rodent with a short furry tail. Woodchucks feed almost exclusively on grasses and other plants. Look for this 5-10 pound mammal in daylight hours in open areas of the park, such as roadsides and meadows.



Woodchuck

Eastern Mole

This burrowing mammal prefers moist soil in open areas, such as picnic areas, trails and fields. Rarely seen, they spend most of their time underground. You may be able to detect their presence as they push soil out of their tunnels forming 'mole hills'. They have greatly enlarged front feet used for digging. With only tiny eyes, moles use their well developed sense of smell to hunt earthworms and other bugs.

Raccoon
The raccoon is found only in North America. Its nearest relative is the bear. This 'masked bandit' normally spends daylight hours sleeping in trees or burrows and forages at night for insects, aquatic animals, seeds, eggs and fruit. Please do not feed the raccoons, they are powerful for their size and can become a pest.

Striped Skunk
The skunk is well known for the nasty smell it produces in self defense. This defense deters most predators, but the great horned owl will prey on them. Skunks have a varied diet, they eat insects, small birds, amphibians and small rodents. Watch along roadsides at night for the distinct black and white coat of the skunk.

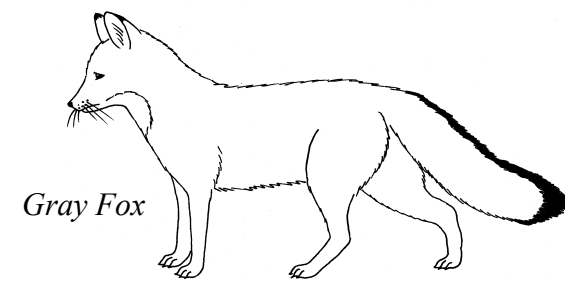
Opossum
This gray haired mammal is the only marsupial in North America, a relative of the kangaroo. Formerly they were common only in southern states, but have gradually extended their range as far north as Canada. Opossums use their naked tail like an extra limb when climbing trees. They will play dead when attacked. Look for this nocturnal creature along the park roadsides at night.

Mink
The mink is a rich dark brown color with a white chin patch. They have a slender body with a bushy tail. Found near streams and waterways where they feed on crayfish, frogs and small mammals. Look for mink in all the park's aquatic habitats.

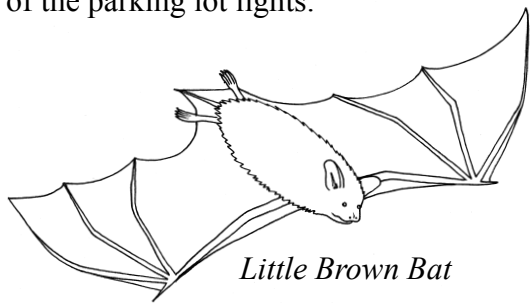
Coyote
The coyote looks like a small German Shepherd. They are nocturnal animals, spending the day sleeping under the cover of bushes or in long grass. They eat almost anything, including rabbits, mice, ground squirrels, insects and fruit. Coyotes which are rarely seen, can sometimes be heard in the park, 'yipping' in the late evening.

Red Fox
The red fox is the larger of the two fox species found in the park. They are usually reddish in color with a bushy white tipped tail, which is characteristic of this species. They prefer open or brushy habitat and can be seen in these areas as darkness falls. Their diet is varied, they will eat small animals, from insects to rabbits, as well as berries.

Gray Fox
This fox lives in the woodlands and will often climb trees to escape larger predators. It is grizzly-gray above and white below, with a black tipped tail. Mainly active at night, the gray fox eats small mammals, birds and some plants. Look for it in the woods during the early morning or twilight. It is seen less frequently than its 'cousin' the red fox.



Little Brown Bat
Bats are the only mammal capable of true flight. Little brown bats feed on insects. They are active at night, capturing moths and other bugs on the wing using a sonar system known as echolocation to locate their prey. They are very effective insect catchers, one bat may eat over 3,000 bugs a night. Look for them after dark in the glow of the parking lot lights.



Whitetail Deer
This is the park's largest mammal, found in woodland and grassy areas of the park. They rest during the day, becoming active as night falls. They eat a wide variety of leaves, twigs and grasses, including poison ivy. When frightened the deer will flee, raising their tail to expose their white rump as a warning to other deer.

As well as the common mammals described in this leaflet there are several other species you may see in the park, including the following (this is not a complete list).

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| Big Brown Bat | Indiana Bat |
| Deer Mouse | Meadow Jumping Mouse |
| Flying Squirrel | Norway Rat |
| House Mouse | |

Mammals of Potato Creek State Park



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